

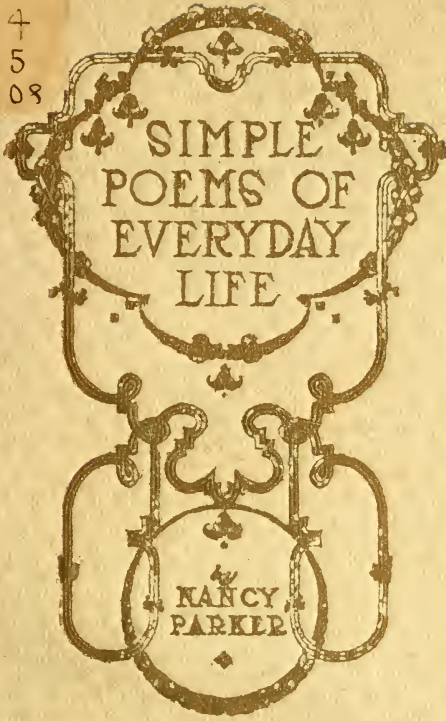
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SIMPLE
POEMS OF
EVERYDAY
LIFE

NANCY
PARKER



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Book A614 S5

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Simple Poems
of Everyday Life

by

Nancy Parker

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Foreword

If the reader derives half the pleasure from the perusal of these verses which I have found in writing them I shall be more than satisfied.

To express oneself is always a joy, and added to this enjoyment I have had the loving encouragement of those whose opinions I value most highly, my dear brothers.

Many of these verses are so personal it would seem almost presumptuous to expect them to be interesting to the general reader, but, after all, humanity is only a large family with the same joys and the same sorrows, and what comes from the heart of one usually finds a response in the heart of another. It is with this hope that I give this little book to the public.

NANCY PARKER.

THE gift of rhyme was given to me:
"I will be a poet," I said.
 But love lasts a day,
 My life was so gay,
That the song in my heart lay dead.

The gift of rhyme was given to me:
I said: "I must do my part."
 But joy was so brief,
 I thought of my grief,
And the song lay dead in my heart.

The gift of the rhyme was given to me:
I thought of my brothers here,
 Of their longings vain,
 Of their joy and pain,
And my song rang sweet and clear.

O H, Human Nature! Faulty, yet so fine,
Born of the world's unsatisfied desire,
The brute's mad struggles toward the divine,
His savage passions melted in Love's fire.
Chained to the earth with links thou canst not break,
Yet with a ceaseless longing for the sky,
Within thy heart an ever haunting ache,
The knowledge that to live means but to die.

Yet when my heart would fail, seeing life's woe,
And my soul sickens at its grief and pain,
Some wondrous act of thine, with love aglow,
Lights up the world and life is good again.
Then I could weep with bliss, with rapture wild,
Content to know but this—I am thy child!

Creeds

WHAT care we, friend of mine, our creeds are not the same,
What if we differ in a creed? 'tis only in a name.

We go the self same road, have the same goal in sight,
Let's call it by a broader name, "The Highway of the Right."

You take a beaten path that has been trod before,
I seek a newer pathway out; they reach the selfsame door.

And when some lightning flash shows us how near we stand,
We cling together in the storm and clasp each other's hand.

Still we must journey on, though often sore beset,
Our feet with cruel thorns are torn, our eyes with tears are wet.

It is the light of Love that shows us how to come,
And whether it be fast or slow, it surely leads us home.

Who enters first the gate, beholds the waiting door,
Will weep until the other come, to press the thorns no more.

I HAD come to the parting of the ways,
And I said, "Which road shall I take?"
At the entrance of one stood Happiness,
From the other Duty spake.

The two stood waiting for me to decide,
Happiness laughing and bold,
But Duty's voice was sad and low,
And his look was stern and cold.

I knew that my fate hung on my choice,
I said, "Let my soul command;"
When Happiness quickly turned away,
But Duty grasped my hand.

I walked with him for many a mile,
Over the thorns and stones,
But Duty gave me never a smile,
And spoke in commanding tones.

At last we came to a mountain side,
I was weary and begged to stop,
But Duty firmly held my hand
And led me straight to the top.

And there on the summit stood Happiness
But a Happiness glorified,
He smiled on me, "Henceforth, my child,
We three shall walk side by side."

Success

WHAT is Success? Can it be gold,
A thing that fools may barter for,
The dross for which men's lives are sold,
The cause of brutal crime and war?
Is this Success?

What is Success? Can it be power,
The thing men crave but to abuse,
The drunken madness of an hour
When they all sense and justice lose?
Is this Success?

What is Success? Can it be fame,
To have a blatant throng go wild
And in a frenzied voice proclaim
It has discovered Genius' child?
Is this Success?

What is Success? Can it be Love,
That flaming but unsteady light
Which shows man brightest realms above,
Then plunges him in darkest night?
Is this Success?

What is Success, I hear a voice—
"It is to nobly do thy best,
The consequence is not thy choice,
And failure adds but to the zest
Of such Success.

"And where is given power divine,
That power to most divinely give,
The strength thou hast is not all thine,
Use it to help a Brother live
And win Success.

"And wert thou but a crossing sweep,
And bravely, nobly didst thy part,
For thy mean lot thou shouldst not weep,
But say in thine exultant heart:
"This is Success.'"

CONSTANCY is a mighty fine thing,
And bein' true to the dead is rare;
But I wouldn't always their praises sing;
They don't need lovin' so much up there.

I once knew a man whose sweetheart died;
He married another girl one day,
And made life Hell for his livin' bride
With talk o' the one who had passed away.

And on the night that her baby came
She chanced to live (God alone knows how),
But we heard her say as she breathed his name
"I'm its mother, I guess he'll love me now."

But when it was over (the low-born churl),
He knelt by the baby and laughed and cried,
But he called it the name o' that dead girl,
And the livin' woman she up and died.

I FOUND an old Latin Grammar to-day,
Did it bring me grief or joy,
When I read the name of a happy girl
And the name of a careless boy?
For on one page was the mark of your knife,
And a little translation of mine,
And I knew that the story of my poor life
Was written in that one line.

Amo—I love—I wrote with care,
Amas—you love—came then,
Amat—he loves—ah! fatal words—
Fell idly from my pen.
It was thus we studied the verb, to love,
In those happy childhood days
We have studied it many a time since then
In many different ways.

But a sister's heart is always fond,
She can't, if she would, forget,
And the love that we bore for each other then
Is fresh in my memory yet.
I see the mark of my pen and your knife
When my eyes are able to look,
And I hug to my heart the thought of the days
We studied this dear old book.

YOU'RE sure that you're sixteen to-day, dear?
Of course your own mother should know;
But sixteen! Why, you were a baby
Only a few years ago.

You say you're as tall now as I am,
Your hair is done up in a braid,
Your dresses reach down to your shoetops?
Yes, you're growing up, I'm afraid.

Your dolls are put up in the attic,
Your picture books all stored away,
You don't need such things any longer
You're getting too old now to play.

Your studies will soon be all over,
You won't go to school any more,
And then you'll be having a sweetheart
And learning Love's wonderful lore.

And some day you'll want to get married
And live in a home of your own;
Oh! What shall I do then, I wonder,
When I am left here all alone?

But there, we won't worry about it,
Come here and sit down on my knee,
And put your arms closer around me
For you're just my dear baby to me.

O H, woman! Held up for a crowd to stare,
 Though thou be e'er so foolish, weak and vain,
 Yet thou art woman, born to woman's pain,
And knowing this how can a strong man dare
To lay thy naked quivering soul all bare.
Man, who has left on thee his lust's foul stain
And all thy happy innocence hath slain,
Let him look in his own heart and beware!

And if a woman in this gaping crowd
Can see thy beauty and thy tender years,
Yet feel herself by thy soft touch defiled,
If by thy shame her own heart is not bowed
May she no daughter bear to dry her tears
Lest God should smite her through her woman child.

YOU have followed the same old primrose path,
In the same old-fashioned way,
That leads to the same sweet land of love,
And this, your wedding day.

You have heard the same old story told,
The one that is always new,
For it had never been told before,
Just as it was told to you.

You have heard the same sweet song, I know,
That all the world has sung,
Yet only those may hear its notes
Whose hearts are fresh and young.

Ah! Do not be offended, dear,
That I say the same old way,
The same old story, the same old song,
And the same sweet wedding day.

It only proves, though the world grow old,
And the stars fade from the sky,
Sweet Love is ever fresh and young,
With a beauty that cannot die.

So here's a kiss, my pretty bride,
And one for your husband, too;
May he always love you the same old way
Is my heart's best wish for you.

COLD cynic, of sarcastic wit possessed,
Who calls my pretty fancies visions wild,
If fond illusions your sight never blessed,
Why are your eyes so pleasant and so mild?

Sad pessimist, who says the world to-day,
Is bound where death and desolation meet,
If you believe the frightful things you say
Why is your laugh so hearty and so sweet?

Vain scoffer at affection's gentle art,
Who calls sweet love "a fever of the mind,"
If you have not a tender loving heart
Why are your deeds so thoughtful and so kind?

Ah, no! My dear friend, I will not believe
The bitter words that from your proud lips roll,
Not while I hear your laugh and can perceive
Behind your kindly eyes a kinder soul.

POOR old horse, hitched to a crazy cart;
 A lonely patient victim of the city's busy mart.

Your head hangs low, your eyes are dim and old,
 I see you start and shiver when the wintry blast is cold.

Your blanket is awry. Its meanness cannot hide
 The torn and broken harness which wears against your sides.

Your spirit is all gone, you meekly stand and wait.
 Your look is so forlorn. You question not your fate.

I give you a kind word, I look into your eyes;
 Sometimes a touch of sympathy brings there a glad surprise.

Your tired head you lift to press against my cheek,
 I know you try to show me the love you cannot speak.

I think of you at night, tied in some lonesome stall,
 Ill kept, ill fed, half frozen, with room to stand is all.

Some day I'll miss you here, but then I shall not weep;
 I'll say, "My dear old friend at last has gone to sleep."

A Stupid Pup.

ONE day a funny little dog
Came barking at my door,
A little yellow puppy that
I'd never seen before.

"Why do you come to bother me?
I know you not," I said;
He only wagged his stubby tail
And shook his frowzy head.

"My house is small," I said to him,
"I have no room for you."
At that he capered round my feet
And made a great to-do.

Oh, such a foolish little dog,
He could not understand,
And when I tried to slap at him
He only licked my hand.

I said, "You foolish little dog,
You must go right away."
He gaily walked into the house,
As though he'd come to stay.

He found a greasy chicken bone
And greased my nice clean floor,
And when I told him that was all
He whined and begged for more.

Then he lay down before my fire
And calmly went to sleep.
Such impudence I never saw;
It fairly made me weep.

And when at last he did awake
'Twas far into the night;
I said, "You must keep very still."
He barked with all his might.

At that I said in accents stern,
"Your time with me is up!"
He yawned and went to sleep again,
That stupid little pup!

That was a year ago, and yet
That dog is here to-day;
I cannot make him understand
That he must go away.

••	Telepathy	••
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AND now the wireless telegram is flashed across the seas,
The words just thrown into the air, or flung upon the breeze.

And high up in a tower, where no other sound is heard,
They catch the flying sentences and read them word for word.

So when the postman passed me by, why I began to think
You might have sent a letter without paper, pen or ink.

So I flew up to my tower, where I always love to go
When I want to be quite happy or to dream an hour or so,

And I read your pleasant letter from beginning to the end,
And felt rejoiced to be assured that you were still my friend.

And though I know it all by heart, I really think you might
Send a written confirmation just to tell me I was right.

Mother's Consistency

MY mother, God bless her, is reverent and good,
She deplores this fast living of ours
And says that the folks of to-day, if they could,
Would usurp God's own place and his powers.

Electricity, mother says, may be all right,
But they carry these new things too far:
"My dear, will you turn on this Edison light?
This lamp's not as bright as a star."

"I've been wanting to see you this whole blessed day,
For here I've been sitting alone,
But then when you need it that's always the way,
There's something goes wrong with the 'phone."

"I'm not very well, I've a pain in my side,
Elevators need constant repairs,
Ours is no exception, nobody can ride,
And I'm not used to walking up stairs."

"What's that you are saying, you just heard to-night,
Your brother, my dear son, is sick!
Good gracious! Don't think that I meant you to write,
But send him a telegram quick!"

"And tell him I'm taking the 'Lightning Express,'
That won't make a stop on the way;
Be sure that you give him that Doctor's address
Whose specialty is the X-ray.

"Now, don't stop to bother about how I feel,
But help me get ready to go.
And say, can't you ring for an automobile?
Those street cars run dreadfully slow!

"If I just reach the station I'll never complain,
Some berths are equipped now, I see,
So a person can telephone right from the train;
Please have them reserve one for me."

HOW many have written of memory's dream,
 While others to music have set it,
 But these are the words I would choose for a theme,
 A phrase of the streets, Oh—forget it.

Is it loss of a fortune that makes you afraid?
 Don't waste any time or regret it,
 For just as good fortunes are still to be made.
 So say “It is gone” and—forget it.

Has hate in your breast left a venomous dart?
 It will poison your life if you let it.
 Do you cherish a grudge 'gainst the friend of your heart?
 Go clasp his dear hand and—forget it.

Does memory drag something out of the past,
 To harrow your soul and to fret it?
 This life is too short, time is flying too fast,
 So bid it begone and—forget it.

Is your heart filled with sorrow that once you did wrong?
 Was temptation too strong when you met it?
 Deal gently with others, but sing a gay song.
 Just do your best now and—forget it.

And I'm sure the good Angel that guards Heaven's gate,
 Knowing life and the ills which beset it,
 Will say when we're tired, I'll not ask you to wait,
 Your trouble is over—forget it.

I NEED no tales of old Romance
To make my senses sway,
Nor charm of style need not enhance
The news I read to-day.

My paper deals not with the past,
The present is its theme;
But oh, its projects great and vast
Are like a wondrous dream.

I see the light of Science burn
And flash across the seas;
I hear the words for which we yearn
Come ringing on the breeze.

Great continents are cut in two,
That oceans, rolling wide,
May send their waters coursing through
For stately ships to ride.

I read of those who fortunes make,
Of those who fortunes give,
And others still, who for the sake
Of Brotherhood would live.

In a few lines the tale is told
Of one who sought but rest,
To her the world was harsh and cold,
To die, to sleep seemed best.

I turn the page, a pleading voice
Leads men to Heaven's door;
The wicked hear him to rejoice,
To go and sin no more.

And so I lay my paper by;
What more could poets say
To touch the heart, to fill the eye
Than news I've read to-day?

So keep your tales of old romance;
They have a charm, forsooth,
No charm is needed to enhance
The mighty Power of Truth.

FOR years the daybreak brought me one suggestion,
I must begin anew my weary life,
Again to ask the never answered question—
“Why were we born to sorrow and to strife?”

But now the birds sing gaily in the morning,
Their music thrills my heart and seems to say—
“Awake, my child! A happy day is dawning,
You shall be with the one you love to-day.”

And so the question that has vexed the ages
Has been so wonderfully solved for me,
The gloomy doubts that have perplexed the sages
I answer with a calm simplicity—

“Why, I was born that I might serve and love him
And not a twinkling star up in the sky,
Nor yet the sun that beams in heaven above him
Has sweeter purpose in its life than I.”

And if he will but keep me always near him,
To find in serving him a joyous task,
Ah! If he will but let me love and cheer him
Then life holds all the happiness I ask.

My Jewels

LIFE, you have cheated me out of so much,
Robbed me of all I once cherished, it seems,
Except a few jewels you never must touch,
I still have my beautiful dreams.

I keep them always so close to my heart
That no one may know they are hidden there,
Oh, cruel world! Do not ask me to part
With my jewels so rich and so rare.

I wear them alone in the dead of the night
That the wondering eyes of the world may not see,
And their tender radiance soft yet bright
Flashes for no one but me.

But I deck myself in their beauty then,
And no Queen could more marvelous jewels wear,
For lo! I am young and happy again
And the world is wondrous fair!

I listen once more to the voice of Love,
I feel again Love's soft caress,
Oh, the sky is so blue that bends above
And life is all happiness.

But hark! Comes a footstep, let me beware,
I must hasten to hide my jewels away
That curious eyes may not wonder and stare
* * * * *
But the dawn breaks cold and gray.

I DREAMED that I might meet him once again,
For Love's sweet sake,
That he would hold my hands and calm the ache
Which throbs here in my heart
Because our lives must lie so far apart;
I dreamed that I might meet him once again.

I dreamed that I might meet him once again,
We two alone,
That he would call me Sweetheart, Love, his own;
Then one last kiss good-bye,
That I might taste its sweetness till I die!
I dreamed that I might meet him once again.

I dreamed that I might meet him once again,
But dark seas roll
Between me and the lover of my soul;
And I can only pray
That in some better land, some fairer day,
Dear God! You let me meet him once again.

I THOUGHT that Temptation would be a creature
My eyes would not care to rest upon,
With deceitful mien and with hateful feature
How proudly I'd tell him "Away, Begone!"

But one day while I sat idly dreaming
Temptation came with his looks of light,
And I knew that the tears from my eyes were streaming
As I saw his beauty and felt his might.

But when Temptation beheld me weeping,
He who sought but joy would have turned away,
When the love in my heart to my lips came leaping,
And I whispered "Stay, Oh, Sweet Tempter, stay."

BETWEEN two generations
 Triumphantly I stand.
 My dear child and my mother
 Still cling to either hand.

One bids me see the Sunrise
 Just dawning, she loves it best;
 One shows me the sun, fast fading,
 As it slowly sinks to rest.

But, ah! For me it is Noonday,
 The Sun in the heavens is high;
 My hands clasp theirs ever closer
 But my eyes look up to the sky!

And I see there such beauty and wonder!
 Let me linger a little while
 Ere I turn my face to the shadows
 And greet the night with a smile.

WHEN I look back over the years of my life,
And see all its sins and mistakes,
When I think of the failures I've made in the strife,
And the sorrowful picture it makes,
Oh! Then when some poor wretched creature I see,
I ask, "Why has God been so good to me?"

When I look down into the depths of my heart,
And see the wild turmoil there,
The passions that rend my resolves apart,
The sullen moods of despair,
When the fate of some other such heart then I see,
I ask, "Why has God been so good to me?"

When I know the temptations that wait me to-day,
When I feel how weak is my hold,
When I see how easy my feet could stray
Into ways of woe untold,
Ah, yes! When I think what I yet might be,
I ask, "Oh, my God! Still be good to me!"

LET me learn patience. Let my restless soul
Possess itself in patience. If the night
Seem all too long until the morning bright,
Beneath the stars may I seek self control.
And when before the dawn the shadows roll
No gentle songster stay in his glad flight
Nor tender bud doom to untimely blight
Through my fierce haste to reach some fancied goal.

The noisy torrent raging to be free,
And plunging madly down the mountain side,
Meets the same fate as the calm river wide,
Both swell the heaving bosom of the sea.
And my impatience but the swifter tide,
Which bears me onward to Eternity.

I 'VE seen so much of sorrow in my life,
So much of turmoil and so much of strife,
That I have said "That day will be the best
When I have laid me down, at last, to rest."
But when I walked out in the sun to-day
And saw the glorious world in brave array,
No joyous bird whose glad note pierced the sky
Had happier song, or lighter heart than I.

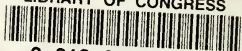
Love that I thought would bless me all my days
Left me to mourn and went his own sweet ways,
And bitterly I said that Love should be
Henceforth a stranger and unknown to me.
But when I heard him knocking at my heart,
I threw its yielding portals wide apart
"Ah, Love! The world was dark without your smile
Come light my life if just a little while."

When first I stood beside a loved one's grave,
I thought life mocked me for the joy it gave,
For I had drained so deep the cup of woe
What taste of gladness could I ever know.
But when my dear child, radiant with delight,
Begged me to share her happiness to-night,
I plucked from out my heart each grief and care,
"I do rejoice, sweet one, life is so fair, so fair."

OH, let me not complain about my fate,
 Nor harbor one mean thought of spite or hate;
 But give me breadth of vision that I see
 There's justice in whatever comes to me.
 Is my dull life a round of petty things;
 Why did I shun great aims and clip the wings
 Of noble impulses which stirred my soul?
 Must I still suffer for my youth's mistake;
 Why would I have my way, nor council take
 Of those who sought my guidance and control?
 Have those I loved left me to walk alone?
 Then by my loneliness may I atone
 For every moment I have spent apart
 From those who should have lived within my heart.
 And so accepting all that comes to me
 With brave endurance and humility,
 Some fair day when the clouds are lifted up
 And happiness holds forth her brimming cup
 I am content if I can justly say
 Let me drink deep, I have deserved this day.

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